

CATHERINE'S EMBASSY TO FLORENCE

Soderini near the Ponte alia Carraia. At the instigation of their neighbours, the Mannelli, who had been admonished while Ristoro was a captain of the Party, they next looted and burnt the houses of Piero and Ristoro Canigiani near S. Felicita. The house of Donato Barbadori, who had no share in the misdeeds of the Parte Guelfa and was absent on the service of the State, shared the same fate. A horde of roughs broke open the prisons and released the prisoners, invaded the monastery of the Angeli where many of the citizens had placed their goods for safety, and sacked it, killing two lay-brothers. This, however, was more than the instigators of the riot had bargained for, and, seeing the work of vengeance accomplished and the mob proceeding to fresh excesses, they prevailed upon the Signoria to send soldiers with orders to hang the first five looters taken in each quarter, choosing Flemings or other foreigners by preference, as a warning to the rest.¹ This was done, and the tumult abated.

But, in the meanwhile, for one brief, ineffable moment, Catherine had tasted in anticipation the longed-for joys of martyrdom—only to be bitterly disillusioned. A band of armed rioters, probably at the instigation of the more embittered victims of the Parte Guelfa, rushed from the sack of the houses of the Canigiani, declaring that they would burn her alive or cut her into pieces. She was apparently alone with Neri, Barduccio, and Cristofano, and with her women, in the little house on the hillside of San Giorgio. Those who kept the house, fearing for their own safety, bade her and her followers leave them : *^f But she, conscious of her own innocence and suffering gladly for the cause of Holy Church, was in no wise moved from her wonted constancy ; nay, smiling and encouraging her companions, imitating her Divine Bridegroom, she went to a place where there was a garden ; and there, after some words of exhortation to them, she gave herself to prayer." Soon the men broke in, brandishing their weapons, and shouting : <^f Where is Catherine ?" She went to

¹ For this "Tumulto degli Ammoniti," cf. Marchionne Stefani, Lib. X. rubr. 792-795 ; Ammirato, I. 2, pp. 717-721 ; Gino Capponi (the elder), *Tumulto dt Ciomfi*, pp. 234-242 ; *Anommo Fiorentino*, pp. 358-360.